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#### NOTES BY THE EDITOR.

##### RELATIVE FREQUENCY OF SUN SPOTS.

We publish herewith the complete table of the so-called relative sun-spot numbers as prepared originally by Professor Wolf, Director of the Observatory at Zurich, and revised by his successor, Prof. A. Wolfer. Professor Wolf chose the mean solar day as the unit of time, and noted day by day both the number of visible groups of spots and also the number of spots contained in each group. A combination of these two numbers gave him his relative numbers, expressing the sun-spot activity for that particular day. He considered that the formation of a new group of spots was more important than the appearance of a new spot in an already existing group, and was led to compute his relative numbers by the formula,  $r = 10g + f$ , where  $g$  is the number of groups visible on any day, and  $f$  the total number of spots, whether they were in the groups or isolated. That is to say, if there were eight spots so arranged as to constitute five groups the relative numbers for the day would be 58. The average of the relative numbers for each day gave the mean monthly numbers, and the average of the twelve months gave the mean annual numbers; and these are the numbers given in the accompanying tables.

A different method of computing sun-spot numbers was adopted by Schwabe, who was the original discoverer of the periodic frequency of sun spots. The computations of Wolf have extended back to the earliest observations, whereas Schwabe's discovery was based on his own observations, which

began in the year 1826. Schwabe adopted a general period of ten years, but Wolf has shown that the period is exactly 11.111 years.

The relative numbers of Wolf do not always seem to give an exact expression of the sun-spot activity, since they take no account of the size of the spot, and some have proposed to introduce this feature into the calculation. But a careful comparison of Wolf's numbers with the record of spotted areas has shown that they are in general quite nearly proportional to each other. Of course, all that we want is the relative condition from month to month and year to year.

In order to make these numbers as reliable as possible, Wolf combined together the records of different observers, using very different instruments, and each of these records was first reduced by him to something like what would have been given by a normal observer—that is, himself—using a standard instrument, namely, his 4-foot Fraunhofer refractor, whose aperture was 3 inches, and magnifying power 64.

His series of satisfactory numbers based on actual observations begins with the year 1749. Observations were, of course, on record for earlier years, but not in sufficient numbers to justify introduction into this table. In fact, many gaps exist after 1749, and can only be filled in by graphic methods of interpolation. In his original table, Wolf distinguishes two degrees of reliability, namely, the heavy print, representing satisfactory and complete sets of observations, and the starred (\*) figures, representing a rather small number of observations eked out by means of interpolations.

The figures that he publishes in italics are simply the maxima and minima, which are italicized in order to attract attention.

Fuller details relative to this subject may be found in the Handbook of Astronomy by Wolf; the article by A. Wolfer in the Met. Zeit., 1892; the Bibliothèque universelle de Genève, Archives des sciences physiques et naturelles, 1891, Vol. XXVI, No. 12, and especially in the annual publication known as the Astronomische Mittheilungen, which was begun by Dr. R. Wolf, and is now continued by A. Wolfer regularly in the Vierteljahrsschrift of the Scientific Society of Zurich.

Those who compare sun-spot numbers with meteorological phenomena should always bear in mind that the spots themselves are not likely to be the cause of changes on the earth, but are rather the result of some process in the sun that affects the earth directly.—C. A.

#### *Relative frequencies of sun spots.*

[From Klein's Jahrbuch der Astronomie u. Geophysik III. 1892-1900 and Wolfer's Astr. Mitt. 1901.]

Year.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Mean.
1749...	58.0	62.6	70.0	55.7	85.0	89.5	94.6	66.3	75.9	152.6	85.2	80.9	70.9
1750...	73.8	75.9	89.3	88.3	90.0	100.0	85.4	103.0	91.2	65.7	63.8	75.4	83.4
1751...	70.0	45.5	45.3	56.4	60.7	50.7	66.3	59.8	23.5	23.2	28.5	44.0	47.7
1752...	83.0	50.0	71.0	59.8	59.7	39.6	78.4	29.8	27.1	46.6	37.6	40.0	47.8
1753...	41.0	32.0	45.7	28.0	88.0	31.7	22.0	39.0	28.0	25.0	20.0	6.7	30.7
1754...	0.0	8.0	1.7	13.7	20.7	26.7	18.8	12.3	8.2	24.1	13.2	4.2	12.2
1755...	10.2	11.2	6.8	6.5	0.0	0.0	8.6	3.2	17.8	23.7	6.8	20.0	9.6
1756...	12.5	7.1	5.4	9.4	12.5	13.9	3.6	6.4	11.8	14.8	17.0	9.4	10.2
1757...	14.1	21.2	26.3	30.0	38.1	12.8	25.0	51.3	39.7	32.5	34.7	35.5	32.4
1758...	37.6	52.0	49.0	42.0	72.8	46.4	45.0	44.0	38.7	37.7	49.0	42.0	47.6
1759...	48.3	44.0	46.8	47.0	49.0	50.0	51.0	71.3	77.2	59.7	46.3	57.0	44.0
1760...	67.3	59.5	59.5	74.7	58.3	72.0	48.3	66.0	75.6	61.3	50.7	61.0	62.9
1761...	70.0	91.0	80.7	71.7	107.2	99.3	94.1	91.1	100.7	88.7	97.9	46.0	85.8
1762...	43.8	73.8	45.7	60.2	39.9	77.1	33.8	67.7	68.5	69.3	77.8	77.2	61.6
1763...	58.5	31.9	34.2	32.9	32.7	35.8	54.2	26.5	68.1	46.3	80.9	61.4	18.1
1764...	50.7	59.7	40.2	34.4	44.3	30.0	30.0	30.0	28.2	28.0	26.0	25.7	36.3
1765...	24.0	26.0	25.0	22.0	20.0	27.0	29.7	16.0	14.0	18.0	20.9	17.0	16.0
1766...	12.0	11.0	86.6	6.0	26.8	3.0	3.3	4.0	4.3	5.0	5.7	19.2	11.4
1767...	27.4	30.0	43.0	33.9	29.8	43.9	42.7	44.1	54.7	58.3	37.8	17.7	37.8
1768...	58.5	66.1	46.8	42.7	77.7	77.4	52.6	66.8	74.8	77.8	60.6	111.8	69.8
1769...	73.9	64.2	64.3	96.7	78.6	94.4	118.6	120.8	149.8	158.2	148.1	112.0	106.1
1770...	104.0	143.5	90.0	51.0	70.1	85.3	109.8	126.3	104.4	108.6	132.9	102.8	100.8
1771...	36.0	48.6	46.7	64.9	152.7	119.5	57.7	58.5	101.4	90.0	99.7	35.7	81.6
1772...	100.9	90.8	81.1	92.2	35.0	57.0	77.3	56.2	50.5	78.6	61.3	64.0	66.5
1773...	54.8	29.0	51.2	32.9	41.1	25.4	27.7	12.7	29.8	26.3	40.9	48.2	34.8
1774...	46.8	65.4	55.7	45.8	51.8	98.5	17.5	6.6	7.9	14.0	17.7	12.8	30.6
1775...	4.0	0.0	11.6	11.2	8.9	12.3	1.0	7.9	3.2	5.6	15.1	7.9	7.0
1776...	21.7	11.6	6.3	21.8	11.2	19.0	1.6	24.2	16.0	30.0	35.0	40.0	19.8
1777...	45.0	36.5	99.0	95.0	80.3	80.7	95.0	12.0	112.0	108.2	105.8	106.3	84.1
1778...	177.8	109.3	124.0	245.0	228.9	171.6	153.0	140.0	171.7	156.3	150.3	105.0	154.4
1779...	114.7	165.1	118.0	145.0	140.0	118.7	143.0	112.0	124.0	114.0	110.0	125.9	159.4
1780...	70.0	98.0	98.0	95.0	107.2	88.0	86.0	86.0	97.8	77.0	60.0	58.7	94.8
1781...	98.7	74.7	53.0	68.8	104.7	97.7	78.5	66.0	51.0	27.3	67.0	35.2	88.1
1782...	54.0	87.5	87.0	41.0	54.8	38.0	37.0	47.7	44.0	32.2	30.5	30.0	38.5
1783...	28.0	38.7	26.7	28.3	28.0	25.3	32.2	20.0	18.0	8.0	15.0	10.5	22.8
1784...	8.0	11.0	10.0	8.0	9.0	6.0	10.0	9.0	8.0	17.0	14.0	10.2	10.2
1785...	6.5	8.0	9.0	15.7	20.7	26.8	36.3	20.0	32.0	47.3	40.2	27.8	34.1
1786...	37.2	47.6	47.7	85.4	92.3	58.0	83.0	89.7	111.5	133.8	116.0	112.7	82.9
1787...	184.7	106.0	87.4	127.2	184.8	99.2	128.0	187.2	157.3	157.1	141.5	174.0	132.0
1788...	138.0	129.2	143.3	108.5	113.0	154.2	141.5	136.0	141.0	142.0	94.7	129.5	130.9
1789...	114.0	125.3	120.0	128.3	132.5	120.0	117.0	103.0	112.0	97.9	104.0	135.5	116.1
1790...	103.0	127.5	96.3	94.0	98.0	91.0	89.3	87.0	77.8	84.3	82.0	74.0	89.9
1791...	73.7	62.0	74.0	27.2	78.7	64.3	71.0	43.0	66.5	61.7	60.0	66.0	69.6
1792...	58.0	64.0	63.0	75.7	62.0	61.0	45.8	60.0	59.0	57.0	56.0	60.0	60.0
1793...	56.0	55.5	55.5	58.0	53.8	51.0	50.0	29.8	24.0	47.0	44.0	45.7	46.9
1794...	45.0	44.0	38.0	28.4	55.7	41.5	41.0	40.0	11.1	28.5	67.4	51.4	41.0
1795...	21.4	38.9	12.6	18.6	31.0	17.1	12.9	25.7	13.5	19.5	20.5	18.0	21.3
1796...	32.0	22.8	15.7	21.0	6.7	26.9	1.5	18.4	11.0	8.4	5.1	16.0	16.0
1797...	14.4	4.2	4.0	4.0	7.8	11.1	4.8	6.0	5.7	6.9	5.8	8.0	6.4
1798...	2.0	4.0	12.4	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	2.4	1.5	1.2	2.7	8.1
1799...	1.6	13.6	21.7	8.4	8.2	10.8	8.1	0.0	0.0	4.6	2.7	8.6	4.1
1800...	6.9	8.3	13.9	10.2	5.0	28.7	21.0	19.5	11.5	12.3	10.5	40.1	15.3
1801...	27.0	29.0	30.0	31.0	32.0	31.2	35.0	38.7	32.5	32.6	39.8	48.2	34.0
1802...	47.8	47.0	40.8	50.0	58.0	55.0	57.0	58.0	65.2	56.5	65.4	64.0	55.0
1803...	66.0	67.0	68.0	69.0	71.0	73.0	73.0	64.0	75.0	76.0	77.0	77.0	71.3
1804...	7.0	75.0	77.0	77.0	77.0	76.0	74.0	72.0	71.0	71.2	67.0	63.0	73.1
1805...	61.0	58.0	58.0	46.8	39.0	49.0	47.0	48.0	44.0	48.0	41.0	40.0	47.6
1806...	39.0	28.0	28.0	24.0	26.4	25.6	31.0	29.0	28.0	27.0	25.0	24.0	28.9
1807...	12.0	12.2	9.6	18.3	10.0	10.2	12.7	12.0	6.7	8.0	2.6	0.0	9.4
1808...	0.0	4.5	0.0	12.3	8.6	12.0	6.7	8.0	11.7	4.7	11.3	12.3	7.7
1809...	7.2	9.2	0.9	2.5	2.0	7.7	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5
1810...	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1811...	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.6	0.0	2.4	6.1	0.8	1.1	1.4
1812...	18.4	1.9	0.7	0.0	1.0	1.3	0.5	18.7	5.2	5.5	7.9	10.1	5.5
1813...	0.0	10.3	1.9	16.6	5.5	10.7	15.7	8.4	18.2	30.5	16.7	19.6	18.8
1814...	22.2	12.0	5.7	23.1	5.8	14.9	18.5	2.3	11.9	21.5	14.5	20.1	14.4
1815...	19.2	32.2	26.2	31.6	9.8	65.9	35.3	47.2	31.5	38.5	37.2	65.0	35.4
1816...	26.8	68.8	73.7	58.8	44.3	48.6	38.8	28.1	49.3	56.4	38.2	80.6	46.4
1817...	86.5	55.2	107.0	25.9	19.2	39.9	47.4	45.4	35.8	35.2	36.5	23.9	41.5
1818...	35.1	18.9	22.1	35.7	58.1	36.1	28.1	30.9	27.4	32.3	18.3	25.8	30.0
1819...	84.4	37.0	20.7	18.4	35.7	39.9	25.8	14.9	27.8	25.1	30.6	24.2	27.4
1820...	18.0	26.6	8.6	18.5	29.3	10.8	29.8	26.3	5.2	8.7	8.2	15.0	1.8
1821...	21.5	2.4	5.7	6.0	1.2	1.8	2.5	4.8	4.4	18.3	4.0	6.1	6.0
1822...	0.0	0.9	16.1	18.3	1.5	5.6	7.9	2.1	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
1823...	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

*Relative frequencies of sun spots—Continued.*

Year.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Mean.
1824...	21.6	10.8	0.0	20.0	2.8	0.0	0.0	1.4	20.5	25.2	0.0	0.8	8.0
1825...	5.0	16.1	14.9	0.4	15.0	15.4	30.9	4.0	11.5	14.4	11.5	22.5	15.6
1826...	17.7	18.2	88.2	23.7	32.4	37.1	52.5	18.9	51.0	51.5	58		